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Report of the Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2017/228 and past practice, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics on progress in its work. Following decision 47/111, adopted by the Statistical Commission in March 2016, the Expert Group was established with the mandate to develop international recommendations on refugee statistics and a technical report outlining the way forward in development of comparable international standards for internally displaced persons statistics. The two documents address the need for international standards and improved comparability and quality of data on refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons, and are aimed at increasing capacity at all levels and addressing the common challenges in measuring the numbers and characteristics of both groups by providing standardized measures and indicators, as well as recommendations on integrating statistical systems. The Commission is invited to discuss and adopt the international recommendations and the technical report on internally displaced persons statistics. The Commission is also invited to discuss and reaffirm the future work of the Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics, as suggested in paragraph 58.

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Report of the Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics

I. Introduction

1. At the forty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission, held in March 2015, Statistics Norway and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) presented a joint report on statistics on refugees and internally displaced persons (E/CN.3/2015/9). The report highlighted several challenges associated with the collection, compilation and dissemination of statistics on refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons, including the lack of consistent terminology, the need for adequate data sources and difficulties in comparing international statistics on refugees and internally displaced persons.

2. The authors of the report suggested that an international conference be organized to bring together international organizations and experts from national statistical offices, with the aim of stimulating discussions on the existing challenges, identifying priorities and potential solutions to address these challenges and exploring how best to incorporate statistics on refugees and internally displaced persons into national statistical systems. They also expressed the need to work on international recommendations on refugee statistics, following an approach similar to that used in the publication *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1*, and a complementary manual with practical guidance for the collection, analysis and dissemination of data on those populations. In its decision 46/104, the Statistical Commission supported the proposal to organize an international conference and acknowledged the need for international recommendations and a related handbook with practical guidance.

3. In follow-up to Commission decision 46/104, the Turkish Statistical Institute, Statistics Norway, UNHCR, the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat) and the Statistical Office of the European Free Trade Association organized the International Conference on Refugee Statistics, held in Antalya, Turkey, in October 2015. While recognizing the importance of improving statistics on internally displaced persons, participants at the conference focused on statistics on refugees and asylum seekers. During the conference, it was agreed that refugee statistics should form an integral part of national statistics and that there was a need to better understand stocks and flows of refugees and asylum seekers. It was also acknowledged that building more efficient information systems, serving both administrative and official statistics needs, and improving comparability between national and international figures, constituted major issues to be addressed.[1]

4. At the forty-seventh session of the Commission, in March 2016, the outcomes of the conference and the way forward to address the common challenges in refugee statistics, which were identified and agreed upon during the conference, were presented in a report by Statistics Norway, Turkstat, Eurostat and UNHCR (E/CN.3/2016/14). The suggestions made by the authors of the report included the establishment of a committee of experts on refugee statistics and the development of international recommendations on refugee statistics and a related compilers manual.

5. The Commission, in its decision 47/111, agreed to establish an expert group on refugee statistics, acknowledging the need to develop standards and improved

[1] The full report of the conference can be found at http://www.cbs.nl/sites/default/files/documents/statistics/UNSO%Conference%20Report%20Antalya%20%28final%29.pdf.

systems on refugee statistics, and at the same time suggested that the expert group include internally displaced persons in its scope of work. It was decided that the overall mandate of the Expert Group was to be focused on developing international recommendations and guidance on refugee statistics and to advance discussions on standards for statistics on internally displaced persons.

6. Based on the decision of the Commission, a steering committee, consisting of Statistics Norway, Eurostat and UNHCR, was established to develop the terms of reference for the work of the Expert Group, which were approved by the Bureau of the Statistical Commission in July 2016.[1] Membership in the Expert Group is open to all national statistical offices and international organizations. In its current form, the Expert Group consists of the Steering Committee, statistical authorities from more than 35 countries and territories,[2] and almost 20 regional and international organizations.[3]

7. Under decision 47/111, the Expert Group was mandated to develop the following deliverables:

(a) A set of international recommendations on refugee statistics, which can be used as a reference guide for national and international work concerning statistics on refugees and asylum seekers (submitted to the Commission at its forty-ninth session);

(b) A refugee statistics compilers manual, with operational instructions on how to collect statistics on refugees and asylum seekers (to be submitted to the Commission at its fiftieth session);

(c) A technical report outlining a way forward for the development of comparable international standards for statistics on internally displaced persons (submitted to the Commission at its forty-ninth session).

8. The Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics has had two meetings. During the first meeting in Copenhagen, in November 2016, the proposed structure of the international recommendations on refugee statistics and the technical report on internally displaced persons statistics were reviewed and groups were established to draft the various chapters of the recommendations. A separate

[1] The terms of reference can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/7116161/7772488/Terms-of-reference-refugee-statistics.pdf.

[2] Countries and territories include: Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Kurdistan region of Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Kosovo (all references to Kosovo in this paper should be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)), Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, the Niger, Norway, Pakistan, Palestine, the Philippines, Somalia, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ukraine and the United States of America.

[3] International organizations include: the European Commission (Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs and Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion), the European Asylum Support Office, Statistical Office of the European Free Trade Association, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat), the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Joint Internally Displaced Person Profiling Service, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Household International Migration Surveys in the Mediterranean Countries: Euro-Mediterranean statistical cooperation project, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Secretariat, the World Bank, and the World Food Programme (WFP).

subgroup was established to work on the technical report outlining the way forward in development of comparable international standards for internally displaced persons statistics. The Joint Internally Displaced Person Profiling Service[1] was asked by the Steering Committee to lead the work of the subgroup, with the support of Statistics Norway and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre as co-leaders. During the second meeting in Oslo, in April 2017, the substance and structure of the various chapters of the documents were discussed in greater detail, including the concrete recommendations to be included in the set of international recommendations. At a third meeting, held in Geneva in August 2017, involving only the members of the subgroup working on internally displaced persons statistics, a set of recommendations was developed for inclusion in the technical report.

9. The Expert Group has now finalized and submitted both the set of international recommendations and the technical report on internally displaced persons statistics to the Statistical Commission for consideration and approval at its forty-ninth session. After the consideration of those documents, the Expert Group will continue its work on refugee and internally displaced persons statistics, focusing on the development of the refugee statistics compilers manual, and refining its recommendations on internally displaced persons statistics. The Steering Committee has agreed that it would be beneficial to extend the mandate of the Expert Group so that it could also develop a compilers manual on internally displaced persons statistics. This would be of added value for the statistical community and would also address the clear need for more action and improved, evidence-based programmes addressing the needs of the growing population of internally displaced persons, using the momentum created by the work of the Expert Group. Both compilers manuals will contain more concrete operational instructions on the implementation of the proposed recommendations and both will be submitted to the Statistical Commission at its fiftieth session in March 2019.

II. Background

10. With the growing prominence of the issue of forced displacement internationally, there is an increasing interest at the national and international levels in statistics on refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons, including complete, accurate, timely and internationally comparable estimates of the numbers of forcibly displaced persons. Estimates of the movements of conflict-induced populations are increasingly relevant for official population statistics, which need to include statistics on forcibly displaced populations in a consistent manner. Incomplete or inadequate statistics on these populations undermine the calculations with regard to the composition of such populations and their movements (migratory and others), which, in turn, affects other statistics, particularly those that are population based.

11. Robust statistics on refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons are also critical for informed decision-making, which ultimately impacts the lives of vulnerable populations. There is a range of potential users of statistics on these populations, including local and national authorities and international organizations. Data on refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons are required in order to improve our understanding of the phenomenon of forced displacement,

[1] The Joint Internally Displaced Person Profiling Service is an inter-agency service, established in 2009, which is concerned with profiling in internal displacement situations. The focus of its work is to provide support to a variety of actors in implementing profiling exercises, including field support, capacity-building and the provision of tools and guidelines (http://www.jips.org/en/home).

analyse its impacts, measure changes over time and provide an adequate response. Quality statistics also provide the requisite evidence to support: (a) better policy formulation and sound decision-making to address the challenges of forced displacement; (b) more effective monitoring, evaluation and accountability of policies and programmes; and (c) enhanced public debate and advocacy.

12. However, existing principles and recommendations on vital statistics, population and housing censuses and international migration statistics only address forced displacement peripherally. The need to enhance the comparability of international migration statistics (including statistics on asylum seekers and refugees) was first addressed in 1953, when the United Nations published *International Migration Statistics*.[4] In 1976, the Statistical Commission published *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration*,[5] to encourage countries to collect, tabulate and disseminate statistics on migrants and to enhance international comparability. In 1998, those recommendations were revised and expanded to include specific guidelines for the compilation of statistical information on asylum seekers. The revised recommendations do not, however, address large movements of refugees or internally displaced persons.[6] Furthermore, many refugees are not international migrants and refugees and internally displaced persons have specific protection needs which warrant dedicated statistics.

13. It therefore became necessary to develop a set of specific recommendations that countries and international organizations could use to improve the collection, compilation, disaggregation, reporting and overall quality of statistics on forcibly displaced populations. The objective of these recommendations is "to improve statistics on an important aspect of international migration and to improve common information about a situation with a significant impact on global welfare".[7]

14. In the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 71/1, Heads of State and Government recognized the importance of improved data collection, particularly by national authorities; called for enhanced international cooperation to improve data collection on refugees and migrants, including capacity-building for national authorities; noted that such data should be disaggregated by sex and age and include information on regular and irregular flows, the economic impacts of migration and refugee movements, human trafficking, the needs of refugees, migrants and host communities and other issues; and stated that data collection would be consistent with national legislation on data protection and international privacy obligations, as applicable.

15. A number of resolutions adopted by United Nations bodies have also emphasized the importance of reliable data on internally displaced persons in order to improve policy, programming and response for these populations, ensure the protection of their human rights and support durable solutions to displacement. These resolutions also make specific recommendations for Governments to seek relevant expertise in order to ensure the availability of reliable data on internally displaced persons.[8]

[4] United Nations publication, Sales No. 1953.XVII.10.

[5] Ibid., Sales No. E.76.XVII.18.

[6] *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1*, can be found at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/SeriesM/SeriesM_58rev1e.pdf.

[7] E/CN.3/2016/14, para. 12.

[8] See Human Rights Council resolutions 20/9 and 32/11 on the human rights of internally displaced persons; General Assembly resolutions 68/180 and 70/165 on the protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons.

16. Lastly, the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 70/1, stress the need for capacity-building and improved statistics, including the increased "availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts" (Goal 17, target 18). Specific recommendations on refugee, asylum seeker and internally displaced persons statistics can serve as a critical instrument to enhance the statistical capacity of national authorities, thereby strengthening the evidence base for decision-making on the protection and assistance of all three groups. At the same time, improved statistics, including adequate disaggregation, in this area will enhance measuring progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, with a specific focus on vulnerable population groups.

III. Development of the documents

17. The set of international recommendations and the technical report, which are background documents related to the present report, have been developed through a collaborative effort by the members of the Expert Group, including the guidance of the Steering Committee. As mentioned above, membership in the Group is open to all national and international authorities and organizations with a stake in refugee and/or internally displaced persons statistics. The current members of the Group represent a great variety of regions and contexts and include a mix of members, some who joined the group out of personal interest and others who were specifically invited to join because of their known experience with refugee or internally displaced persons populations, their specific capacity and/or to cover additional geographic or developmental areas.

18. UNHCR and the Joint Internally Displaced Person Profiling Service served as secretariat of the Expert Group and were in charge of coordinating the work on the set of international recommendations (UNHCR) and the technical report, in consultation with the Steering Committee and the co-leaders on the work on individual chapters. The work on the set of international recommendations was mostly carried out by the members of the Steering Committee (UNHCR, Eurostat, Statistics Norway), while work on the technical report was led by the Joint Internally Displaced Person Profiling Service with support from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre and Statistics Norway as co-chairs and chapter leads. As set out above, chapter groups for the different chapters of the set of international recommendations and a subgroup for the technical report were established during the first meeting of the Expert Group. Chapter leads were selected to be in charge of coordinating the work of the chapter groups.

19. All members of the Expert Group were invited to provide input and feedback throughout the process, especially to ensure that different regions and contexts were reflected in the recommendations. Since the Group includes more than 35 national statistical authorities, it was possible to identify and include various country-specific examples as case examples in the recommendations and technical report, illustrating how statistics on refugees and internally displaced persons can be integrated into national statistical systems. The ultimate goal was to ensure that the final recommendations were relevant and useful to the various national statistical authorities as well as to regional and international organizations.

20. The two meetings of the Expert Group and the additional meeting of the subgroup on internally displaced persons were held in order to ensure thorough

discussions on the content of the documents and agreement on the outstanding issues and final recommendations. Furthermore, two draft versions were circulated for comprehensive feedback within the Group, and there was extensive communication among the members of the Group to discuss the contents of the two documents.

21. The Steering Committee served as an advisory board throughout the process, clarifying questions and comments received whenever possible. It should be stressed, however, that the final documents do not reflecting the position of the Steering Committee or any other single organization or authority, but rather reflect a consolidated understanding and consensus on the part of the members of the entire Expert Group.

22. From 10 November to 10 December 2017, the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat conducted a global consultation on final drafts of the set of international recommendations and the technical report for all relevant authorities and offices of the States Members of the United Nations. In response to the feedback and comments received on the final drafts, the documents were modified and edited for submission to the Commission.

IV. International recommendations on refugee statistics

A. Need for international recommendations on refugee statistics

23. Statistics on refugees and asylum seekers are published regularly by national authorities and by regional and international organizations, including UNHCR and Eurostat. In the case of a number of countries, UNHCR collects and publishes such statistics on their behalf, until they have the capacity to produce their own statistics. There is a clear need for capacity-building and for addressing the challenges associated with the collection, compilation and presentation of data on refugees and asylum seekers, which affect the quality of published statistics. Improved statistics on these populations are crucial in order to ensure informed decision-making and evidence-based policies and programmes that will adequately serve their needs.

24. One existing challenge is the lack of comparability between the statistics on refugees and asylum seekers produced by different countries and across various displacement situations. This arises due to the inconsistency of terminology, concepts, definitions and classifications, as well as variation in the methods of data collection, compilation and presentation at the national and international levels. Data on refugees and asylum seekers are typically collected for administrative rather than statistical purposes, and the definitions employed reflect country-specific legislation, policies and practices.

25. In this regard, there is a need to more effectively differentiate, conceptually, between international migrants and refugees. In some situations, refugees might be seen as a subgroup of migrants, however, legally, protection-wise, as well as statistically, a refugee is not adequately covered under the term "migrant" and in some situations, refugees are clearly not migrants at all (for example, most Palestine refugees). This is also why there is a need for concrete recommendations on refugee statistics, in addition to the existing *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1*.

26. There is also a need to improve the understanding of the concepts of flows and stocks of refugees and asylum seekers, and to build efficient information systems that can serve the needs of both administrative and official statistics. The measurement of

forced population movements in humanitarian crises presents unique technical, operational and political challenges, affecting the accuracy and reliability of available data. Refugees and asylum seekers are highly mobile, especially in ongoing humanitarian crises, and population distributions can change rapidly, affecting, among other things, sampling frames for surveys.

27. There are several gaps in official statistics, including a lack of basic demographic data on asylum seekers and socioeconomic data on refugees. The availability of data on basic characteristics of these populations would permit analysis of their socioeconomic well-being relative to general migrants and the population at large, as well as their degree of integration. There is also a need to maximize the use of available data sources (for example, by integrating questions on reasons for migration and seeking refugee status into censuses and other survey instruments) while at the same time advancing the use of new data sources (for example, spatial or big data).

28. There is limited connection between national statistics on refugees and asylum seekers, often managed within immigration authorities, and national statistics on migration and population. Additionally, there are significant variations across countries in terms of the size of forcibly displaced populations, the capacities of the national statistical and administrative systems and national policy priorities. In particular, capacity constraints in developing countries limit the scope and effectiveness of data collection and dissemination activities.

29. It is widely acknowledged that humanitarian and development approaches need to be aligned with each other and that actors working in these areas need to collaborate more effectively in order to facilitate, inter alia, the smooth transition from emergency situations to durable solutions for displaced populations. The work of the Expert Group on international recommendations for refugee statistics, by specifically involving national statistical authorities and building on their capacity, was aimed at bridging the gap between humanitarian and development work and promoting the production of better statistics to address the needs of persons of concern in both the short and long-term.

30. In another challenge to the work of statisticians working in this field, it should be noted that the extreme sensitivity of data on refugees and asylum seekers, and the importance of confidentiality and data protection in refugee statistics, may limit their access to information within administrative systems.

B. Outline of the international recommendations on refugee statistics

31. Based on the identified challenges, including the need for international standards and capacity-building in the area of refugee and asylum-seeker statistics, it was decided to develop a set of recommendations on refugee statistics. The recommendations are aimed at addressing the existing gaps by investigating, and providing recommendations and standards about, the following elements:

(a) The legal framework and refugee definitions;

(b) Defining refugees and refugee-related populations for the purpose of statistical measurement;

(c) Measuring the number of refugees;

(d) Measuring the well-being and integration of refugees and refugee-related populations;

(e) Coordination and strengthening of systems of refugee statistics.

32. In the recommendations, statistical definitions of the refugee population, including scope and the relevant stock and flow measures, are elaborated. Issues resolved in the recommendations include the difference between migrants and refugees and the principle that, while recognizing that there is some overlap when producing statistics, refugees are not simply a subset of migrants and, in some cases, may not even be migrants at all. Three categories have been developed to describe the different subsets of the population in scope, including: persons in need of international protection; persons with a refugee background; and persons who have returned from abroad after seeking international protection.

33. The minimum set of classificatory variables, basic statistics and key indicators, to be collected and reported on the different population groups, have been defined in the recommendations. The concepts and classifications of refugees and asylum seekers are translated into core questions that enable the identification of these populations in data sources in a practical and cost-effective way. Because of the complexity of legal definitions in this area, a simplification process was used to arrive at a workable sequence of questions that can be used in surveys and censuses.

34. The recommendations include some concrete discussions about the usefulness of indicators derived from general household and labour force surveys in providing meaningful results for refugees, considering the need for disaggregation by refugee status and an adequate sample size and design. It is also recommended that surveys and censuses include refugee camps in their sampling frames. Furthermore, the possibility of data matching, the integration of survey and census data with administrative data and record linkage using both country administrative data and register data from UNHCR and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, are addressed. The recommendations stress the need for an integrated data infrastructure.

35. The recommendations also include examples and guidance for assessing the well-being and integration of refugees and, in this regard, take into consideration the importance of benchmark populations within the host country, including the general migrant population in the host country. The recommendations also discuss the importance of standardizing indicators of well-being and integration so that they may be internationally comparable and allow an assessment of the success of integration efforts across regions and countries. A concrete list of recommended indicators for measuring well-being and integration, linked with the comprehensive refugee response framework and the Sustainable Development Goals indicators, is included in the recommendations.

36. The coordination across national statistical systems, spanning different statistical agencies and taking differences between centralized and decentralized systems into account, is also addressed in the recommendations. It is recommended that the national statistical office or primary statistical authority maintain overall responsibility for the integrity and validity of all official statistics and coordinate the process, ensuring effective planning, coordination and dissemination. In addition, the need for having an appropriate national legal framework in place and adhering to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics is stressed.

37. Recommendations are also made with respect to metadata standards, data sharing and the dissemination of refugee statistics, and methods of evaluating statistical systems and quality assurance for refugee statistics are addressed. Examples from regional organizations, such as the regional economic commissions

and the European Union, are used to discuss existing recommendations on statistics and different coordinating roles. Moreover, the need to engage ministers and senior politicians at the international and regional levels to elevate refugee statistics as a priority for political and government agendas is addressed.

38. The last chapter of the recommendations addresses improved coordination within international and national systems and provides recommendations on establishing an appropriate governance body to ensure the harmonization of concepts, definitions and reporting on refugee statistics; Member States should be included in these deliberations. A model that could be followed in this regard is that of the United Nations Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation.

V. Technical report on the statistics of internally displaced persons

A. The need for a way forward to internationally comparable standards on internally displaced persons statistics

39. Internally displaced persons account for the largest share of displaced populations globally, and there is growing recognition of the need for accurate and actionable data about them in order to inform national responses and support policy processes. However, in collecting statistics on internally displaced persons, there are particular conceptual and measurement challenges, and guidance on this topic is scarce. There is a need for the development of standards for quality and more comparable statistics on internally displaced persons.

40. Among the few national statistical offices or national statistics services that produce and publish statistics on internal displacement, notable variation in the specifications used for statistical measurement is evident. The reasons that drive the collection of data on internally displaced persons differ from context to context, and in the majority of contexts, much of the statistics collected on are gathered for operational purposes (for example, for providing humanitarian assistance) and are often not defined as official statistics. Oftentimes, operational statistics on internally displaced persons simplify or distort specifications, are collected by different actors with various needs or are not systematically shared or reported on.

41. Another key challenge of in the collection of statistics on internally displaced persons is the operationalization of concepts that have not yet been standardized. Various practices for translating the definition of an internally displaced person into a statistically measurable unit exist due to differences in national legal frameworks and their applications in data collection. Although in many contexts statistics depart from the comprehensive definition of internally displaced persons established in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, there are important commonalities, as well as a need for improved practice, in this area. Developing a unified statistical framework for this population remains feasible, helps to provide clarity regarding conceptual challenges across contexts and improves the comparability of data.

42. In order to be useful for decision-making, statistics on internally displaced persons need to be aligned, interoperable and of sufficient quality. This, however, requires clear standards and related tools for the production of official statistics. Determining whether a person is or is not internally displaced is an important first step in the collection of quality statistics on internally displaced persons. Collecting data on the characteristics of internally displaced persons can also illuminate the

socioeconomic situation of these populations, thereby informing appropriate operational and policy response. Quality statistics on internally displaced persons also allow for an analysis of progress towards the achievement of durable solutions to displacement, and support the role of Governments in providing protection and assistance to them.

43. The production of official statistics requires effective coordination. Without coordination, data collection efforts can be duplicated, sometimes resulting in the existence of competing data and divergent results owing to the use of incompatible specifications and measurements. Effective mechanisms are required to align quality standards and to regulate methodologies acceptable for official statistics, to ensure best use of resources and to disseminate statistics on internally displaced persons for all relevant users and the general public. Many types of coordination mechanisms exist at the national level, differing in their mandates, composition and organization. They also differ in how influential they are. At present, international coordination of statistics on internally displaced persons is limited, and current practice shows little comparability of such statistics internationally. Similar to challenges observed at the national level, the way the international community defines and measures internal displacement internationally is not aligned.

44. While some initiatives exist, and several international organizations are committed to improving the production of quality statistics on internally displaced persons, there has been no clear way forward yet. This is why the mandate of the Expert Group included the development of a technical report, as described below. The drafting of the technical report marks the very first time that a collaborative effort has been undertaken to define a way forward towards the development of comparable international standards for statistics on internally displaced persons. The first set of recommendations will need to be refined over time, with the intention of leading to a more detailed set of internationally agreed-upon recommendations on internally displaced persons statistics.

B. Outline of the technical report on the development of statistics on internally displaced persons

45. Owing to the difficulties in conceptualizing and comparing the number of internally displaced persons in statistical terms, the need for a technical report outlining the way forward to the development of comparable international standards for statistics on internally displaced persons was expressed and specifically requested by the Statistical Commission in its decision 47/111. Based on that decision, the technical report has been developed, taking stock of the following elements:

(a) The legal and policy framework;

(b) Defining internally displaced persons for the purpose of statistical measurement;

(c) Collecting numbers on internally displaced persons: considerations and sources;

(d) Collecting characteristics on internally displaced persons: challenges and applications;

(e) Coordination systems at national and international levels;

(f) Recommendations towards the establishment of a statistical framework on internally displaced persons.

46. The technical report primarily takes stock of the existing practice on collection of official statistics on internally displaced persons. In addition, it makes recommendations towards a framework for such statistics, with the aim of paving the way for the production of comparable, quality statistics on these populations across different contexts in the future.

47. As a starting point, the technical report considers the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement in order to define and delineate the characteristics of internally displaced persons in legal terms and how they could be translated into statistically measurable terms. While the Guiding Principles, which are well reflected in regional and national laws and instruments, provide a good basis for arriving at a statistical definition, additional criteria are identified in the report to ensure that internally displaced persons can be statistically differentiated from other population groups.

48. The report also discusses international data quality standards, as outlined, for example, in the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, and the specific challenges related to the collection of comparable statistics on internally displaced persons. It describes the differences between stock and flow measures in the context of internally displaced persons and critically reflects on the variety of definitions used in current practice by national statistical authorities. It outlines the different context-specific challenges that hamper the collection of comparable and high-quality data on internally displaced persons and proposes a way forward towards international standards on the collection of statistics on this population group.

49. The report also describes and makes recommendations on the possible future use of different data sources for the production of internally displaced persons statistics, including national censuses, administrative records and registers and surveys, as well as operational, qualitative and big data. The report recommends that different types of statistics be collected on internally displaced persons, including numbers and important characteristics for the production of data that is relevant for effective policymaking and response to the situations faced by internally displaced persons.

50. When looking at the characteristics of internally displaced persons, the technical report specifies how they can be identified in official statistics and reflects on the capacities of different data sources to do so. The report also provides examples of indicators that can be used for measurement, for example, progress towards durable solutions, and provides concrete resources for identifying relevant and comparable indicators to be measured. Furthermore, the need for comparative analysis to fully understand the displacement context is emphasized and elaborated on.

51. By providing a number of examples, the technical report addresses the importance of coordination at the national and international levels in order to improve the collection of statistics on internally displaced persons. It stresses the role of national strategies for the development of statistics and yearly statistical plans in helping to mainstream the production of these statistics and to enhance the availability of comparative data with non-displaced populations. Including statistics on internally displaced persons in the mandates of national statistics services will facilitate adherence to international statistical quality standards, even in cases where the primary focal point for data production is not a statistical agency.

52. The technical report stresses the responsibility of national Governments to organize statistical production and provide capacity for it through human resources,

training and funding. It is acknowledged, however, that the international community should support the development of quality statistics on displacement. The intention is to establish participatory and transparent processes that build on best practices for the production of statistics, and also to establish cooperation between displacement-affected areas and international organizations, as well as between countries facing similar challenges.

53. The technical report also draws on technical elements of the set of international recommendations, for while they are two separate documents, they built on each other and cover some common elements, such as quality standards for statistics, the advantages and disadvantages of different data sources, the responsibilities on national level and the importance of coordination within and between systems at the national and international levels.

VI. The way forward

54. Following the presentation of the set of recommendations and the technical report, the Expert Group will continue its work on refugee and internally displaced persons statistics. Member States and organizations wishing to take part in the future work of the Group are invited to join and to contribute to the next steps in the process. In the upcoming phase, the Group intends to produce the following two documents:

- A refugee statistics compilers manual (to be submitted to the Statistical Commission at its fiftieth session in March 2019);
- Refined recommendations and a compilers manual, including a set of internationally comparable standards on internally displaced persons statistics (to be submitted to the Statistical Commission at its fiftieth session in March 2019).

55. The main goal of the Expert Group is to develop international recommendations on refugee and internally displaced persons statistics to be used by national statistical authorities and international actors alike. As part of these recommendations, internationally comparable indicators are developed, which will improve the quality and comparability of national and international statistics to provide a basis for evidence-based decision-making and planning on different levels. The refugee and the internally displaced persons statistics compilers manuals will entail concrete operational instructions for national as well as regional statistical systems, with the aim of advancing statistical capacity at different levels, including through the support of international partners.

56. The aim of the two compilers manuals is to provide operational instructions on the implementation of the set of international recommendations and the technical report. Through concrete recommendations and guidance, the compilers manuals and the recommendations aim to strengthen the national capacity of the countries hosting asylum seekers, refugees and internally displaced persons and to assist them in collecting and disseminating high-quality statistics on those populations.

57. In addition to their work under the mandate of the Expert Group, members also aim at engaging in concrete capacity-building activities, in line with the international recommendations and in support of countries that may face difficulties in implementing the standards.

VII. Points for discussion

58. The Statistical Commission is invited to consider the following two background documents with implications for States Members of the United Nations:

(a) International recommendations on refugee statistics;

(b) Technical report on statistics on internally displaced persons;

59. In addition, the Commission is invited to discuss and approve the future work of the Expert Group, in particular with regard to:

(a) Development of a refugee statistics compilers manual;

(b) Development of revised recommendations on internally displaced persons statistics and an extension of the mandate of the Expert Group to include the development of an internally displaced persons statistics compilers manual.